

Genes, Girls, and Gamow: After the Double Helix

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FROM THE PUBLISHER (Alfred A. Knopf): Immediately following the revolutionary discovery of the structure of DNA by James D. Watson and Francis Crick in 1953, the world of molecular biology was caught up in a gold rush. The goal: to uncover the secrets of life that the newly elucidated molecule promised to reveal. Genes, Girls, and Gamow is James Watson's report on the amazing aftermath of the DNA breakthrough, picking up where his now classic memoir, The Double Helix, leaves off.

Here are the collaborations and collisions of giants, not only Watson and Crick themselves, but also legions of others, including Linus Pauling (the greatest chemist of the day), Richard Feynman (the bongoplaying cynosure of Caltech), and especially George Gamow, the bearlike, whiskeywielding Russian physicist, who had turned his formidable intellect to the field of genetics; with Gamowan irrepressible prankster to bootWatson would found the legendary RNA Tie Club.

But Watsonat twentyfive already the winner of genetic research's greatest jackpotis obsessed with another goal as well: to find love, and a wife equal to his unexpected fame. As he and an international cast of roguish young colleagues do important research they also compare notes and share complaints on the scarcity of eligible mates. And amid the feverish search for the role of the then still mysterious RNA molecule, Watson's thoughts are seldom far from the supreme object of his desire, an enthralling Swarthmore coed who also happens to be the daughter of Harvard's most eminent biologist.

Part scientific apprenticeship, part sentimental education, Genes, Girls, and Gamow is a penetrating revelation of how great science is accomplished. It is also a charmingly candid account of one young man's full range of ambitions.

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